

Question on Notice
No. 84
Asked on 15 February 2017

MS PEASE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR INNOVATION, SCIENCE AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY AND MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS (HON L ENOCH) —

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise on support to Queensland small business to develop their digital capability?

ANSWER:

Queensland's 414,000 small businesses are vital to the Queensland economy, making up more than 97 per cent of all businesses in the State.

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting this important sector and is implementing the *Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016-20* (the Strategy). The Strategy aims to make Queensland the place for small business to start, grow and employ.

Customer driven demand for online access to goods and services is a key issue facing many small businesses. Building small business digital capability is essential to ensure smaller firms can confidently respond to customer needs and remain innovative and competitive. It is also acknowledged that by adopting digital technologies, businesses stand to benefit through reduced labour costs, increased revenue and time savings.

The Strategy has a focus on enhancing small business digital capability through the Small Business Digital Grants Program. The program delivers grants of up to \$10,000 in matching funding to small businesses to embrace new technology within their business. Funding is available to purchase digital hardware, software or training and skill development.

Round one of these grants has now closed, with 1,285 submissions received. A total of 155 businesses around Queensland shared in just over \$1 million in grant funding. Of these grants, 30 per cent went to businesses outside south-east Queensland and 13 of the recipients were Indigenous business owners.

Round two of the Small Business Digital Grants Program opened on 8 March 2017.

The new Digital Scorecard was launched on 8 March 2017 to assist small businesses to gauge their current digital status and identify opportunities to develop their digital capability.

Small businesses can access the Digital Scorecard through the Business Queensland website (www.business.qld.gov.au). They may also complete a 15 minute online survey to check their digital capability and receive an assessment of how they fare against their peers and others in the industry.

Business owners who complete the online assessment will receive an invitation to attend a Digital Business workshop to focus on website development, social media and use of mobile and other new technologies. The workshops will commence in the second quarter of 2017.

In addition, programs under Advance Queensland are assisting small businesses in the development of their digital capability.

Advance Queensland's Community Digital Champions engage with and help inform their communities, including businesses, about the benefits of going digital, with the aim of increasing digital awareness, adoption and online participation.

The Ignite Ideas Fund supports small and medium enterprises to commercialise new or improved products, processes or services to secure investment, launch into global markets and grow jobs. Thirty-nine recipients received a total of \$5.65 million under round one of this program.

The Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Program builds collaboration between universities and small business by supporting small businesses to hire a university graduate to work on an innovative project. To date, 53 recipients have received a total of \$2.8 million under this program.

Underpinning these programs and initiatives, the Business Queensland website (www.business.qld.gov.au) provides businesses with 24/7 access to a wide range of information and resources to help build their digital capability, including guides on how to develop a digital strategy, information about using cloud computing and broadband in business, an information technology risk management check list and tips on how to do business online and use digital media.

Through the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, which I Chair, I hear first-hand from small business owners and representatives from business and industry groups about issues of importance to the small business community. Digital capability is an issue which has been raised and is one of the key priorities for the Council during 2017.

The Queensland Government is working hard to support small business to develop their digital capability and position them to benefit from the digital economy. I look forward to continuing this work during 2017 and to helping Queensland small businesses unlock their potential.